

## 'Operation Walk Tall' makes a difference for Afghan children

By 1st Lt. Kristin J. Burt  
Logistics Task Force 191

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - It started with a toe.

A young boy visited the field hospital on Forward Operating Base Salerno in late March; he was there because a medical team discovered his irregular heartbeat. While the doctors listened to his heart, a logistician noticed his shoes.

They had been cut open to accommodate his growing feet, and his protruding big toe gathered dust as it rested, unprotected, on the hospital floor. What would this boy's footprint look like? How many steps could he take with half a shoe?

The word "footprint" is a common military term used to describe the weight of a unit's capability in a particular area.

For Logistics Task Force 191, "footprint" refers to the maintenance, ammunition supply, fuel, water purification, warehousing and sling load support the unit provides throughout Regional Command East. The LTF's mission is so varied that "foot steps" would be a more appropriate term, were it operationally accepted.

It is the varied steps of its Soldiers that will comprise the LTF print. The nature of the mission emplaces its Soldiers throughout the country, and it doesn't keep them in one place for very long. As a result, while the effect the Soldiers will have on RC East is huge, the impression left at each node could be faint.

The Soldiers of LTF 191 wanted to sponsor a communi-



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

1st Lt. Tucker P. Mahoney, operations officer for Logistics Task Force 191, and 1st Lt. Kristin J. Burt (background), personnel officer for the LTF, unload boxes filled with shoes from the United States in support of Operation Walk Tall on May 12.

ty contribution program; they wanted to leave a lasting impression on an area in which they would only be working for a short while. On April 2, the program was announced and Operation Walk Tall began.

The Operation called for two weeks of everyone's time and the results would benefit children in the Khost area.

For two weeks, each Task Force member reached out to friends and family back home in Kaiserslautern, Germany, the United States and to new friends made on the FOB.

Everyone was challenged to have their shoes, clothes, blankets and pillows in the mail by

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May 20, 2005

## Bottle and throttle don't mix

**By Jim Wiehe**

Army News Service

FORT BENNING, Ga. - We hear "It happened to me" stories all the time.

Reflecting on the past and the things we did (if we've been fortunate enough to survive and grow old) is an amazing tool. Too bad younger Soldiers can't grasp this concept yet.

Sometime during my late 20s, I read that each of us will experience a major automobile crash during our lives. This was mine.

It was April 1972 and I was fresh out of the Army and enjoying civilian life again. Some old friends enticed me to go bar-hopping with them, and we joined some of their old school buddies.

It was like the words from Bob Seger's "Against the Wind"

... 'I was living to run and running to live, never worried about paying or even how much I owed, moving eight miles a minute for months at a time, breaking all of the rules that would bend...'"

We got tanked-up and decided to do more than just bend the rules that night. All nine of us-too drunk to see or think straight-crammed into a car. And it wasn't just a "car," it was a 1969 Ford Galaxy. It was made of steel and weighed a ton, was faster than a speeding bullet and could leap tall buildings in a single bound. Or at least we thought so.

... "Wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then" ...

We took off and headed back to the watering hole doing about 80 mph on a

two-lane city street. The driver wasn't slowing down for anything. The front and back seats were full with two of us sitting on someone else's lap. Not one of us was wearing a seatbelt.

... "Against the wind, we were runnin' against the wind, we were young and strong and we were runnin', against the wind" ...

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"Because I was young and drunk, I almost left it 'all' out. Fortunately, I lived and learned a crucial lesson. There are many things you can safely mix with alcohol, but asphalt isn't one of them."

- Jim Wiehe  
*Ranger Training Brigade  
Fort Benning, Ga.*

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We were getting deeper and deeper into trouble as the Galaxy swerved from side to side and bounced off parked cars on both sides of the street. Ahead was a traffic light at a five-corner intersection. Suddenly, timing the green light became critical. We made the turn, hit another parked car and then headed for the tallest, fattest wooden utility pole I had ever seen. I didn't have much time to think about what was about to happen.

... "I began to find myself searching, searching for shelter again and again" ...

I was sitting directly behind the driver on another passenger's lap. As I grabbed the driver's seatback, I had enough time to look for my fourth-point-of-contact; I figured I'd plant a kiss on it just before we

hit the pole.

When I came to, I found I'd been thrown over a 4-foot-high chain-link fence. The pole had torn all the way through the Galaxy, splitting it in half right behind the driver's seat where I'd been sitting just seconds earlier. If you can believe it, no one was killed. Both of the driver's legs were crushed and a couple of us had broken shoulders, but somehow I came through unscathed!

We must all have had our guardian angels with us that night because the pole was in front of the hospital. The emergency room staff knew something had happened because they heard (and felt) the impact.

I was 20 years old when this happened-and I almost didn't get any older. Nearly 33 years have passed since that

night. I've seen a lot more of life and understand what I almost lost.

... "But those drifter's days are past me now, I've got so much more to think about, deadlines and commitments, what to leave in and what to leave out" ...

Because I was young and drunk, I almost left it "all" out. Fortunately, I lived and learned a crucial lesson. There are many things you can safely mix with alcohol, but asphalt isn't one of them. The bottle and the throttle don't go together in my life anymore. I'm older and wiser now and I've stopped "running against the wind."

(Editor's Note: Jim Wiehe is a tactical safety specialist with the Ranger Training Brigade at Fort Benning, Ga.)

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# Medics hold 'sick call' for Afghans at new clinic

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen  
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Medics from Forward Operating Base Salerno christened a new clinic just outside the base May 5 by treating 100 local Afghans as part of a Medical Cooperative Assistance Program.

Medics from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the FOB Salerno Hospital, along with two local doctors saw about 100 patients. Most of the patients had minor problems and were given medicine and sent on their way.

This was the first MEDCAP at the clinic, which was completed April 25 at a cost of about \$20,000.

Sergeant Frank Gervasio, a medic from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-504 PIR, was one of the medics treating locals at the MEDCAP. He said missions like this are important and should be continued.

"Yes, we could just give the supplies to the locals, and they could treat them perfectly fine, but this way they see the Soldiers interaction with the locals and that we're concerned about them," he said.

The 24-year-old St. Louis native said he and his fellow medics only see one or two sick call patients a day on



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

**Capt. David Harper, battalion surgeon for 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, examines an Afghan boy's injured leg May 5 at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan.**

base, so missions like this allow them to practice their skills.

"Here, you can see anywhere from 100 to 200 people in a matter of three hours, and (the medics) can learn their medications and also what's going on in the local community that could affect the Soldiers themselves," he said.

Missions like this also allow the medics to work side-by-side with more experienced doctors. One of the two doctors at the May 5 MEDCAP was Dr. Bashir Ahmadzai, a general surgeon who has been working with the FOB Salerno

hospital for about nine months.

Bashir said missions like this are crucial because most Afghans can't afford health care.

Additionally, he said when locals see American Soldiers helping Afghans, it reinforces to them that the Americans are their friends.

"If we have this medical treatment free for the local people here, I think that will be the main cause in creating love between the American Soldiers and Afghan people," Bashir said.

In addition to his duties as

a doctor, Bashir said he also teaches personnel at the FOB Salerno hospital local languages and customs.

"I want to familiarize them with the local people here," he said.

Bashir said he gets satisfaction from helping people who might not otherwise be able to afford health care.

Gervasio said he also gets satisfaction participating in missions like this, and it doesn't matter to him who he treats, be it a fellow Soldier or a local Afghan.

"Men, women, children, we'll treat them all," he said.

## Pentagon debunks Quran desecration story

By Gerry J. Gilmore  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - A Newsweek magazine article accusing U.S. personnel at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, of desecrating a Quran has no basis in fact, a senior Defense Department official said here May 17.

"We've certainly found nothing that would give any substance to the Newsweek story," Lawrence Di Rita, principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, told reporters

at a Pentagon news conference.

A Newsweek story published May 9 reported that American military interrogators at the Guantanamo prison facility had flushed a Quran, the Muslim holy book, down a toilet. The article sparked deadly anti-U.S. riots in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other Muslim countries.

The magazine's editor has since apologized for the gaffe, and the article has been retracted.

Di Rita emphasized that standard operating procedures at Guantanamo "are very focused on the proper respect

for the Quran." Those procedures, he noted, have been reviewed periodically to ensure that detainees can practice their faith and religious items like the Quran are treated with respect.

U.S. Southern Command, which has jurisdiction over the Guantanamo facility, is conducting a review of the prison's rules and regulations, Di Rita noted.

Di Rita said the practices in place at Guantanamo are believed to be appropriate ones, but added, "there's always an opportunity to learn, and we'll try to do that."



Courtesy Photo



Cpl. Rich Mattingly

**Marines and Sailors from Company K, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment salute during a memorial service May 13 at Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam, Afghanistan, to honor Lance Cpl. Nick Kirven and Cpl. Ricky Schoener who were killed in action May 8 in the Laghman province of Afghanistan. Left - Lance Corporal Nick Kirven and Cpl. Ricky Schoener, team leaders with Co. K, pose for a picture taken during their deployment to Afghanistan.**

## Marines remember spirit of fallen brothers

**By Cpl. Rich Mattingly**  
3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt.

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE MEHTAR LAM, Afghanistan** - The squad and platoon-mates of two Marines killed in a bloody clash with insurgents May 8 gathered throughout the past week to reflect on memories of their fallen brothers.

Sitting in a tent where just a week prior they had prepared for their latest mission with Cpl. Richard Schoener and Lance Cpl. Nicholas Kirven, the mood among the squad-mates was somber, the sounds of battle still ringing in their ears.

From the rafters hung the American flag they had all signed, two signatures slightly more noticeable than the rest as afternoon light filtered through the fabric. There was a lingering sense that the tent should have been filled with laughter and talk of what the Marines planned to do when they returned home next month.

However close to the surface

their feelings of loss and grief were, the Marines of Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment only spoke of the positive light they say their friends "Nick and Ricky" brought to everything they did.

As they took turns telling stories and sharing memories, they said they will remember the two Marines as friends, heroes and as Sgt. Charles Bennett, Kilo Co. squad leader recalled with emotion, "The two finest young Marines I have ever seen."

"They were happy go-lucky guys," said Cpl. Jason Valencia, rifle team leader with 2nd Platoon, Kilo Co. "They were both the kind of Marines who were serious enough to always do their job or give you the shirt off their back, but never ones to take any situation too seriously or let you be down."

The other Marines agreed, every man sharing stories of Kirven and Schoener's incredible ability to make the best out of any situation, their irrepressible spirits and their love of their families.

"We were in this place called Paitak," said Lance Cpl. Nick Collier, rifleman and close friend of Kirven, "and it must have been twenty below and we were miserable. Nick came up to me and started taking stupid pictures of us just to relieve the misery. By the time we were done, I'd forgotten just how bad of a time it was. That's the kind of guy he was."

Kirven was well known for being a practical joker, and for his flashy style of dress and concern for his looks. Squad members jokingly called him "Paris" and teased him for the time he spent fixing his hair. But he was also known to his Marines and his superiors alike as a strong leader and a proficient instructor in his specialties as a Marine Corps Water Survival Instructor, normally a staff noncommissioned officer billet, and as an assault climber.

"He was a great teacher," recalled Staff Sgt. James Horvath, Kilo Co., second platoon sergeant. "He taught me how to be a better swimmer at

3/3 in about ten minutes. He had that maturity to handle and instruct all levels of Marines and all levels of abilities."

"We also had him as a team leader," continued Horvath, "usually a noncommissioned officer's billet, but in our line of work you have to put the right man in there to do the job and he was the right man."

"He was one of the original 'Kilo guys,'" said 1st Sgt. Vincent Santiago, Kilo Co. first sergeant, referring to Kirven's two-deployment tenure with the company. "He was always joyful, always had a smile for everyone. I remember sitting down with him for lunch and discussing his future. He told me that he was considering staying with Kilo for another deployment, helping to mentor the younger Marines. When a Marine makes statements like that, you know he really cares about those around him."

Corporal Schoener, or "Ricky" to his friends, is

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# Marines

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remembered as an intellectual young man who read voraciously and always had a story to share for any situation.

"You could be more pissed-off than you'd ever been in your entire life," said one of his squad mates, "and then Ricky would come out of nowhere with some off-the-wall comment or joke or he would bother you about something else, just bugging you until you forgot what you were mad about in the first place."

Schoener came to Kilo Co. in August of 2004, just in time to begin training for deployment to Afghanistan. After spending the first part of his enlistment in Marine Corps Security Forces as a sentry at Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, Ga., his company says he made the transition to his new "grunt" unit seamlessly.

"He didn't have problems transitioning his style of leadership to work in Kilo," said Horvath. "Without trying to force a round peg in a square hole, he integrated his prior skills into what we did," he continued, referring to the valuable knowledge of close-quarters battle Schoener possessed.

Other Marines mentioned his prowess as a pitcher in their flight line games of pick-up baseball and his glowing talk of family from his small hometown in Louisiana.

"He adored his sister and his mom," said one Marine. "He was always talking about them and how he couldn't wait to get home

to see them."

The hours that changed the lives of everyone surrounding these two young men were a final testament to the strength of their character and spirit.

When Schoener and Kirven led the way toward the lifeless body of an insurgent and were fired on from a nearby cave with automatic weapons, wounding both, their squad said they never wavered. As their fellow Marines opened fire on the cave, both men continued fighting the fortified enemy until the blast from two enemy grenades took their lives.

The rest of the platoon continued the assault, clearing the cave of enemy fighters and trying to resuscitate the fallen Marines.

With helicopters unable to reach their position, the Marines and Corpsmen of 2nd platoon were forced to make an arduous journey through the mountains back to their patrol base, humping for miles while low on ammunition, out of water and under continuing fire from the enemy. They carried Schoener and Kirven the entire way.

"They would not let go of their brothers," said Sgt. Rob Campbell, 2nd squad leader talking about his squad. "We could only walk maybe a few hundred feet or so before we had to switch guys up, but we would never leave them behind. They'd have done the same for us."

"These Marines are a family. Those two were the kind of men whose Marines refused to put them down even though

they looked like they couldn't possibly take another step," said Horvath, finishing, "That says a lot about a man."

The operation during which Schoener and Kirven gave their lives effectively broke the back of a significant insurgent cell operating in northern Laghman province. That cell had long targeted Coalition and Afghan government forces in the region. Afghan authorities confirmed 15 insurgents killed and an additional six wounded and captured. Three of those killed were cell leaders and it is suspected that more died in the action.

A few nights later, a Marine aimed a projector at the side of a tent and showed pictures and movies of Nick and Ricky to a group huddled around the glowing, makeshift screen.

For another night with Kilo Company, the memory of two Marines who were always "larger than life" made Marines laugh and smile, and the memory and celebration of their lives sustained their Marines again. It's reflected indelibly across every face that no Marine or Sailor who served their country alongside them will ever be the same.

Lance Corporal Nick Kirven of Fairfax, Va. was 21 years old. He is survived by his mother Beth, sister Mary-Pride, brothers Joe Purcell and Joseph Belle, father Leo Kirven and stepfather Mike Belle.

Corporal Ricky Schoener of Hayes, La., was 22 and is survived by an extended family including his mother, Bonnie Breaux.



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

## Army Chief of Staff visits FOB Salerno

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker talks with Soldiers from Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division May 10 at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan.



# Shoes from page 1

April 15 in order to receive the contributions on the FOB by mid-May. Nearly every Soldier used the internet as their primary means of reaching out.

What each Soldier found, though, was that just one email from one individual would spawn dozens of emails that carried the objective of Walk Tall across two continents.

Spc. Audrey Knapp, one of the LTF's intelligence analysts, was afraid the post office would be flooded by donations.

The Task Force operations officer, 1st Lt. Tucker Mahoney, started receiving emails from business owners and friends-of-friends almost immediately.

"I sent out an email to a list of people I had in my address book and they forwarded it to people they knew," Mahoney said. "I received e-mails from a New Balance representative, and also a representative from Verizon Wireless. I was amazed at everyone's willingness to contribute. Everyone wanted to give something."

The original goal set by the Task Force was to donate 150 pairs of shoes and 50 pounds of clothing. The first donation came from the 68th Medical Company, part of the FOB Salerno Medical Evacuation unit. Their contribution of 27 boxes started the operation off on the right foot.

With the MEDEVAC unit's boxes safely stored, the LTF received their first shipment of donations from home. The results of the email traffic manifested themselves when the post office was overwhelmed with almost 70 boxes, 60 of them addressed to Mahoney.

The first shipment came from Douglas Intermediate School in Douglas, Mass., where Mahoney's dad used to be the principal.

"People I knew were going out and buying shoes for small children," Mahoney said. "The consensus was that if they had more time, they'd be able to send more shoes. This response was within two weeks - that's pretty good."

The results of the operation



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

**1st Lt. Kristin J. Burt, personnel officer for Logistics Task Force 191, 1st Lt. Tucker P. Mahoney, operations officer for LTF 191, and Spc. Rashawnda S. Stogner, a human resource specialist for LTF 191, work on unloading and inventorying boxes filled with shoes that were sent from the United States in support of Operation Walk Tall May 12 at Forward Operating Base Salerno.**

quickly turned into a logistics challenge for the logisticians of 191: what started as a small idea with a plan to store the few boxes of donations in the barracks turned into a storage and distribution mission as the donations overwhelmed the FOB post office.

The Soldier put in charge of receiving storing, and cataloging the contributions was Pfc. David Aranzamendi, the LTF's mail clerk. Aranzamendi procured two 20-foot containers for storage and immediately developed a system for cataloging each package addressed to "Operation Walk Tall" that arrived for the LTF.

His noncommissioned officer in charge, Staff Sgt. Jean

Harris, is proud of his initiative and organization.

"He's the one out there lifting the boxes, sweating in the CONEX, and counting the shoes," Harris said. "He doesn't mind the work because he's so excited to be able to give to the kids. He's done a great job, and he's providing the company first sergeants with results that can be quantified so the Soldiers can know just how much their effort has contributed to the community."

To date, Operation Walk Tall has received 155 boxes containing clothes, blankets, pillows and 861 pairs of shoes. Soldiers expect that number to be a stepping stone to the final tally of donations.



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

**Shoes sent from the United States in support of Operation Walk Tall are inventoried in a leader's book.**

The shoe count will easily reach 1,000, almost 10 times more than the original goal. As for the weight of the clothes, Aranzamendi is planning on palletizing the boxes and using the Movement Control Team's portable scales to get the final numbers.

Lt. Col. Thomas J. Langowski, commander of LTF 191, is confident that Operation Walk Tall will continue to impact the Khost area even after LTF 191 is gone.

"It takes years to build something, and days to destroy it," Langowski said. "That's why this is important; it's significant and real. It's critical that this is the relationship we continue to build with the Afghan people. We want to build something that's everlasting."

The Soldiers hope that with this operation the impression LTF 191 leaves in FOB Salerno will not be a faint one. They know that improving the quality of life one step at a time will enable the children of the Khost area to take their own steps.

Just as the operational footprint of the LTF wouldn't exist without the many steps of its Soldiers, the footprint of Khost residents won't exist without the steps of their children.



# 'King of Battle' thunders Salerno



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

**A 155mm Medium Towed M198 Howitzer belonging to Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, sends a round downrange May 13 at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan.**

**By Spc. Laura E. Griffin**  
Assistant Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Most people have never felt anything like it in their life. For a split second, you can't breathe. You can't see. You might even fall over... and that isn't even the strongest charge.

The power of the 155mm M198 Howitzer is awesome in every sense of the word. It is that power that makes Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division "The King of Battle" at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan.



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

**Sgt. Damien M. Mattocks, a gunner for Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, adjusts a 155mm Medium Towed M198 Howitzer for displacement May 13.**

"The artillery is called 'The King of Battle' because the infantry merely occupies the land, but artillery preps that land before the infantry arrives so they have less resistance when they're actually there," said Sgt. 1st Class William A. Covey, a platoon sergeant in Battery C. "It's hard for the infantry to function in their job without the artillery. Just like the mortars, we're another asset for the maneuver commanders to use, and when used wisely, we're very effective."

Putting the Howitzer's power to use starts with a call from the forward observers in the field.

"The forward observers call in on the radio; they tell us where they want us to shoot," said Sgt. Lawrence F. Scheck, a field artillery tactical data systems specialist in Battery C. "Basically we put that information into our advanced field artillery tactical data system computer, along with what kind of rounds we're shooting, where we're shooting, who's shooting and who's calling it in, it computes that data and gives us actual firing data to send down to the guns."

They call the forward observers when they fire and the observers give them feedback to adjust fire.

Adjusting fire is done with just one gun, said Scheck. While adjusting that gun, the other guns follow along on the radio so they know what's going on and where to shoot when the call comes to "fire for effect" - when all the guns shoot at the same time.

Getting those tubes on target and sending rounds downrange takes the carefully orchestrated teamwork of at least seven people.

The "Number 1 Man" loads the round and propellant, primes the weapon and pulls the lanyard. The "Number 2 Man" lifts the loading tray with the round on it, carries the empty tray back and puts the next round on the tray.

The "Number 3 Man" helps load the round and takes the extra powder increments to the rear. The ammunition team chief maintains accountability of the ammunition, prepares the ammunition for firing and cuts the powder into the required increments.

The assistant gunner adjusts the elevation of the Howitzer tube. The Gunner adjusts the tube left or right. Finally, the section chief verifies the fuse, round, charge being shot, gunner's data and gives the command to fire.

The distance the round travels depends on the size of the charge that is loaded behind the round. The charges range in size from the Charge 8 Super to the Charge 5.

"The Charge 8 Super fires the greatest distance," said Spc. Richard A. Stephens, the ammunition team chief on Battery C's gun number four.

"I like firing," said Spc. James H. Reeves, the "Number 1 Man" on Battery C's gun number four, adding that he par-

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# Infantrymen build base in Bermel

By Sgt. Douglas DeMaio  
20th Public Affairs Det.

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE BERMEL, Afghanistan** - A new Forward Operating Base being built in the Paktika Province is giving the Coalition and the government of Afghanistan a footprint in the Bermel district and bringing the battle to the front door of insurgents.

Since April 27, platoons from Company A, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, have been building FOB Bermel, and progress is rapidly being made.

"It seems like we are doing something worthwhile here," said Sgt. William Underhill, 3rd Platoon.

The FOB is bringing security to the remote district of Bermel. Afghan National Army and Police, along with 1-508, are using the base as a staging ground for operations throughout the remote district to bring security and stability to the previously ungovernable region.

"We're looking to fight a suc-



Sgt. Douglas DeMaio

**Pfc. Todd Arney, Company A, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, assists local workers building Hesco barriers around FOB Bermel, which the unit is constructing.**

cessful counter insurgency by going on the offensive and establishing a secure presence in the area so the government of Afghanistan can begin to function in the district," said company commander Capt. Joseph Geraci.

Geraci said the government of Afghanistan had previously tried to govern the region, but

the police in Bermel had been murdered by insurgents along the boarder region of Pakistan.

"What we've done here is put a big shock on to the enemy's position here," Geraci said of setting up the FOB.

The FOB's perimeter is already complete and permanent structures are already being built to house the securi-

ty forces patrolling the area.

Primarily the Afghan Army and police will patrol the district, allowing the 1-508th to provide training and logistical support for the host nation forces.

"We are still in the process of teaching them how to patrol this area on their own," said Pfc. Todd Arney, one of Underhill's Soldiers.

Even though host nation forces will be patrolling the district, the 508th will be in the area, so the animosity surrounding foreigners not normally welcomed to the tribal area will need some work, Arney said. When the 508th arrived in the area, villagers where reserved at first, but many of the villagers have warmed up to the security and service the infantrymen are providing to the community.

"The people know why we are here," Arney said. "For the people that don't want us here, we haven't yet had a chance to change their mind. If we do get to stay here, people are going to change their minds. A lot of people already have."

## Villagers ask for security to be reestablished in Bermel

By Sgt. Douglas DeMaio  
20th Public Affairs Det.

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE BERMEL, Afghanistan** - The Bermel District Center, located next to Forward Operating Base Bermel in the Paktika province, is helping the government of Afghanistan and the villagers in the community speak up with a clear voice that lawlessness in the district will no longer be tolerated.

On May 7, an Afghan flag was raised in the courtyard of the soon-to-be-built district center.

Tribal leaders, village elders and host nation forces gathered at the flag to pledge allegiance to the reestablishment of the government of Afghanistan in the district.

"We're proud of the flag and will sacrifice our body for it," said Police Chief and acting Mayor Nader Khan. "Our government wants to reestablish a secure presence in Bermel, and with the help of the Coalition, we have begun the process of bringing peace and prosperity to the district."

The district had previously appointed government representatives, but they were

murdered by enemies of the state.

Villagers and Paktika Governor Manghal agreed that the government needed to reestablish its presence in the district, Khan said.

The reestablishment is now being supported by the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, the Afghan Border Police and Coalition forces.

Forward Operating Base Bermel is housing many of the Afghan forces in the area and will serve as a place of safety for government officials to conduct operations without fear for their life.

"We're in the service of our people," said ANA Capt. Safellah, who like many Afghans, only has one name. "We are here for security and to safeguard the country."

Standing up a security presence in Bermel comes at an opportune time, with the upcoming elections, Khan said.

"Having police, ANA and the Coalition here makes it possible for (everyone) in Afghanistan to participate in the elections," Khan said.

The center will serve as a place for village elders in the district to come together and

help make a better future for Afghans, Khan said.

"The most important pillar of the functioning and effectiveness of this government is security by the Afghan people," said Capt. Joseph Geraci, commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Geraci and his company began building the base April 27. Since then, the company has established a perimeter around the base and helped train the ANP to effectively stabilize the district.

"Host nation building is helping them get their infrastructure established, so they can be self sufficient," said Geraci, who represents 1-508th for facilitating economic growth in the district through contracts that will help build the base.

Since the reestablishment of the government in Bermel, along with the improvement in security, two men in the district have decided to run as candidates in the elections, Geraci said.

A mayor of the district who has not yet been named was scheduled to take office May 20.



# Roads pave way to prosperity for Khost

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen  
Editor

KHOST, Afghanistan - During the Russian occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the lack of good roads into and out of Khost province presented an advantage for the Afghans who were fighting their Soviet oppressors.

With the Khost-Gardez Pass - the only road connecting Khost to neighboring Paktia province - controlled by the Afghans, the Soviets had to rely on air assets to get troops and equipment into the province.

Because of its inaccessibility, the Russians never really secured a foothold in Khost, and the province remained an Afghan stronghold throughout the occupation.

Today, however, that one-time advantage is proving to be a disadvantage.

The lack of good roads has left Khost isolated from its neighbors and is inhibiting trade. While business is booming in other Afghan cities that are closer to main roads, business in Khost city and outlying villages is progressing more slowly.

Traveling by car, it takes about six hours to get from Khost to Gardez, assuming no mud slides have blocked the road.

Driving within the city isn't exactly pleasant either. Almost all the roads are dirt and they are littered with holes, making driving painful for vehicles and their passengers.

With help from the Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team, that should soon change.

The PRT is currently funding six road construction projects in Khost city. The main road through town will be paved with asphalt, while five additional roads will be smoothed and covered by gravel.

Altogether, the PRT is spending about US \$600,000



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

**An Afghan man leads his sheep in front of a tractor working on a road in Khost, Afghanistan.**

to improve the roads in Khost.

Master Sgt. Edith Horn, civil affairs team-B leader at the Khost PRT, said the PRT is focusing on Khost city because it is the main economic hub for the province.

"If we improve the roads, that will encourage more of the jingle truck drivers, the donkey carts and the people from the outer districts to bring their supply into the city so it can be sold," she said. "But the most significant thing is that the money will stay in the area and just recirculate."

In addition to helping the economy, the new roads will also improve transportation, including allowing local residents to get to the hospital faster.

"The hospital was very excited when they heard we were improving the roads, especially in the downtown area," Horn said. "We had supplied them with ambulances in the past, and the ambulances were getting pret-

ty messed up on the bouncy road."

Horn said the construction shows the people that their government is working for them.

"They see the government working with the PRT and the Coalition, and it really strengthens the government's stability in the area," she said.

Mahamod Khan, who has driven a tractor for 14 years, is one of the local construction workers trying his hand in a new line of work: road construction.

He said the construction will be beneficial in more ways than one.

"If the road is bad," he said through an interpreter, "it is hard to travel for the people if someone is sick, and we can't get him to a doctor in time."

Khan said he is proud to do this work because it is good for the community.

Eventually, Horn said the K-G Pass - the road linking Khost province to neighboring Paktia province - will be

improved as well. Currently, engineers are examining the area because it is prone to mud slides.

According to Horn, the K-G Pass is a life source for Khost province, and improving it is a priority for the Coalition.

"Once the goods come in from Pakistan, they're sold here in Khost, and then pushed into Kabul and the rest of the country," she said. "They have a significant economic impact. So the K-G pass is a high priority."

At one point, while driving through Khost recently, Horn started pointing out various projects she could see, including several road reconstruction projects. She said it made her feel good to know she's a part of so many projects that will one day help make Khost more prosperous.

"The greatest thing is when the people come up to you and they shake your hand and they thank you," she said. "That's the best reward right there."



# Taliban leader turns himself in to Marines

**By Cpl. Rich Mattingly**  
3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt.

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan - A former insurgent commander swore allegiance to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan April 14 in Asadabad, agreeing to turn in his weapons and cease hostilities against Afghan and Coalition forces.

As Coalition forces have been hunting near the Afghan-Pakistani border for insurgent leaders, Najmuddin turned himself in to Company I, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, abandoning his run as one of the more elusive insurgent leaders.

The Marines were informed by a message received the morning of April 10 explaining where the commander was located and his intent. The company leadership quickly moved to the designated location and, crossing over a bridge into the compound, finally came face-to-face with the man they were able to recognize only from an outdated photograph.

He has been allowed to participate in the Allegiance Program, a program currently offered to Taliban and Hezb-E Islami Gulbuddin fighters who wish to stop fighting and start participating in the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

"We've been working on this guy for a long time," said 1st Lt. Justin Bellman, India Co. Executive Officer. "It was just a matter of time before either we captured him, killed him or he turned himself in. He made the right decision and we're going to

hope that he becomes a positive force in his community."

A ceremony which was attended by nearly 300 civic and religious leaders from across the Kunar province was the first step in the process of repatriation for Najmuddin who explained his reasons for turning himself over to the Marines through an interpreter.

"I am tired of running," said the former insurgent. "I realized that my community was suffering because of [our] attacks on the Coalition and I did not want that any more."

His participation in the Allegiance Program comes on the heels of extensive operations around the areas Najmuddin was known to frequent in the Pech Valley. Aggressively pursuing the detention of insurgent leadership in the area afforded Marines the success that had eluded other units.

"This individual orchestrated several attacks against Coalition forces before we got here and began to conduct attacks against us in Nagalam from the moment we arrived. It did not take us long to let him know that we were not going to sit back and take that," said Lt. Col. Norm Cooling, commander of 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines. "Instead we took the fight to his backyard, to the difficult, cold and mountainous terrain of the Korangal Valley."

The Marines of India Company, once tasked with eliminating the threat Najmuddin posed to stability in the area,

applied constant pressure on him for two and a half months.

"In that time, he didn't have time to conduct attacks against our installations," said Cooling. "He was too busy trying to survive and he finally got tired of it."

While he said the constant presence of well-trained Marines was the ultimate reason he turned himself in, it was also the humanitarian outreach and rehabilitation projects in his area that Marines participated in that convinced the former insurgent leader to come forth.

Bellman, who spoke with Najmuddin, said he expressed happiness with many of the good things he saw the Marines doing in the Pech Valley and that he knew his area was improving because of the Afghan and Coalition forces.

The governor of Kunar, Asadollah Wafa, said the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan hopes the program will put an end to local insurgencies and further drive a wedge between Afghans and the foreign-national terrorists who have been operating in Afghanistan. By accepting former insurgent "middlemen" like Najmuddin, he hopes that the money and support that keeps the insurgency alive in eastern Afghanistan will dry up.

The Allegiance Program is an effort to bring many formerly prominent Afghans back into the fold of the new government, Wafa said. As long as an individual has committed no crimes against humanity, he may get a second chance at citizenship.



Cpl. James L. Yarboro

## 'America's Battalion' air assaults into Sarkani Valley

Marines from Company I, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment provide security while fellow Marines insert from a CH-46 Chinook helicopter during security and ambush patrols in the Sarkani Valley in Afghanistan's Kunar province on May 7. The battalion is conducting security and stabilization operations in eastern Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



# Up Front & Centered: Morale morals

**By Master Sgt. Geoffrey Carter**  
CTF Thunder Public Affairs Office

Sometimes we are forced to make decisions, not just between right and wrong, but also between right and right.

Recently I learned of a situation in which someone's professional responsibility came into conflict with his deepest values. That got me to thinking about choices we all have to make in our daily lives.

For example, in our Army work or in private business, during a budget crisis we're sometimes forced to dismiss a loyal employee. Family choices are sometimes even harder, like when a son or daughter has a big basketball game on the same afternoon that a VIP or our biggest client is scheduled to visit the office. Both choices are right; but no matter which choice we make, it won't feel right.

Military leaders are constantly called upon to make a choice for the good of the many at the cost of a few or just one individual. Those choices are the tough ones for everyone in a leadership position and those choices will become defining moments for the individual's character.

If you know of a person who might have suffered an injury because of an act of hate against a nationality, do you bring that incident to light, or do you suppress it so as not to alarm the whole nation?

"To become leaders in the military or in

business, managers need to translate their personal values into calculated action," says Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr., a John Shad Professor of Business Ethics at the Harvard School of Business. He states that in today's workplace, three kinds of defining moments are particularly common.

The first is personal identity, which raises the question of "Who am I?" The second type is organizational as well as personal, where both the character of groups within an organization and the character of an individual manager are at stake. The third type of defining moment is the most complex, and involves defining a company's role (in our case the Army) in society.

How do these three traits relate to us working in or for the Army? Let's start with "Who am I?" Am I the type of person who is scheduled to work from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., and do not work one minute longer? Or am I the type of person who will continue to work on a project or task until it is completed before I go home and not ask for comp-time or over-time?

Who we are as individuals in the military is no different. Are we the type of soldier who shows up to our assigned duty station on time every morning just so we can turn around and head over to the dining facility and have breakfast before beginning work?

Defining moments for work groups is the second trait. How, for example, should a manager respond to an employee who repeatedly shows up for work late? We may take into account that the employee or soldier is a single parent and we instill our family values into letting the behavior slide. What we fail to consider when we take this action is how it might be perceived by the single soldiers or other single employees in the company.

These situations require a leader to confront personal beliefs, the values of their work group, their responsibilities to the people they manage and bring problems to a resolution. But as a manager you must avoid ethical myopia, where you believe that your entire group sees the problems through your eyes. Everyone has their own point of view so seek feedback from your team.

The third trait asks "Who is the Company?" In our case the company is the Army and they have a clear set of values in place: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless-Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. These values help us direct our introspection and calculate our actions. We are a part of that company or society which gives us a purpose.

Machiavelli said: "A man who has no position in society cannot even get a dog to bark at him." I must be doing the right thing because I'm always being barked at.



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

**Pfc. Josh L. Burnett, a "Number 3 Man" for Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, loads a round into a Howitzer May 13.**

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particularly likes firing the Charge 8 Super.

"It's probably the most exciting thing I've done here because of the power of the charge and the limits it puts the gun through because it actually makes the breach, the closure that I load the round in, touch the ground," said Reeves. "It shows you what the max power of that gun can do."

Spc. Paul M. Crandall, the "Number 2 Man" on gun number four, is also impressed by the Charge 8 Super.

"If you're looking directly at the cannon when it fires the Charge 8 Super, your eyes will have a red out for half a second," said Crandall. "It's from the shockwave from the cannon; you can actually feel it

hit your body."

When the mission is over, the guns quiet and the earth stops shaking in Salerno.

"That's the life of the field artillery, we sit around and wait for the bad guys to pop

up and then we put them down," said Covey. "We don't always get a real clear battle damage assessment, but we know when the bosses come down here and say, 'Hey, good shooting,' that's all we need."



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

**View up the barrel of a M198 Howitzer belonging to Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment.**





Soldiers take off at the start of the 5k Rocket Run May 14 at Forward Base Salerno, Afghanistan.

Master Sgt. Geoffrey Carter

## Salerno personnel take part in Spring Rocket Run

**By Capt. Dwayne Wirfel**  
CTF Thunder Public Affairs  
Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, Sailors and civilian employees here had one last blast May 14, running the 5k or 10k route along the perimeter of the base before many of them redeploy.

The run was dubbed the "Rocket Run" for FOB Salerno's propensity to be the target of enemy rocket attacks.

"Fourteen units participated, about four hundred of those personnel ran the 5k and two hundred ran the 10k route," said Sgt. Maj. Eugene R. Brewer, the operations sergeant major for Combined Task Force Thunder.

Participants waited in formation to start the event while Sgt. Maj. Brewer gave them the rules and a safety brief.

"You all know what to do should we be rocketed during the race," said Brewer. "Run

Faster!"

Runners who successfully completed the race were given a T-shirt with the dates of incoming rocket attacks from the last year listed on the back.

Col. Gary H. Cheek, commander of CTF Thunder, reminded everybody in his opening remarks just why he thought participation was so important.

"This last event of Task

Force Thunder needs to continue on, soldiers at a forward operating base need events like this to provide a way to forget about the war for just a little while, to just have fun," said Cheek.



Master Sgt. Geoffrey Carter

**Spc. Luke Bauer, Spc. Kenneth Golston and Capt. Eric Palicia, all of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Combined Task Force Thunder, lead other runners in the 10k Rocket Run May 14 at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan.**